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HEALTH IN PAKISTAN

WORKING PAPER

Goal: The United States Government's health program in Pakistan supports the efforts of the Government of Pakistan (GOP) to develop the capacity to deliver, with the assistance of non-governmental organizations, high-quality, cost-effective health interventions. In particular, the program seeks to increase contraceptive prevalence, reduce fertility rates, reduce infant mortality, and prevent maternal deaths.

Strategic Context: Quality basic health services are uneven in Pakistan with the rural population particularly underserved. Pakistan's high fertility rate is contributing to population growth that is expected to more than double the population by 2050. This increase is set to outpace economic growth and overwhelm the GOP's ability to provide essential services in key sectors such as education, energy, agriculture, water, and health. Lack of access to contraceptives for healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy is one of the major contributors to the high fertility rate and to high maternal, newborn, infant, and child mortality and morbidity rates. Lack of access to essential services also means that women and children die from preventable diseases and suffer from higher morbidity. Ineffective government management of health programs has created dissatisfaction in the population; extremist-linked charities can capitalize on this by providing basic services that the government is unable to provide.

The health sector is likely to be further compromised by the ongoing devolution of health services to the provinces, which do not yet have the financial and human resources to successfully take on these added responsibilities. Federal and provincial governments are currently negotiating financial and administrative roles and responsibilities in the health sector at both federal and provincial levels, which need to include adequate funding, skilled staff, and management and accountability systems at the provincial level.

Description of U.S. Government Activities:

- U.S. assistance will focus on well-tested health interventions targeting women and children: healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy; maternal and child health, including immunizations; and infectious diseases such as HIV and polio. This focus aligns with the cornerstone of President Obama's Global Health Initiative – improved health impact focusing on women and children through sustainable and integrated health systems. At the request of the GOP, the U.S. Government will provide technical assistance to the federal and provincial governments for defining their appropriate roles and responsibilities under the devolved health system.
- Support provincial governments in establishing integrated programs for effective and efficient delivery of key services that include healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy, immunization, and maternal health, newborn, and child health interventions. This will

strengthen human resource development and logistics management, including procurement of equipment and commodities.

- Undertake signature infrastructure projects announced by Secretary Clinton: the Lady Willingdon Hospital, Jacobabad District Headquarter Hospital, and 60-bed fistula/obstetric and gynecological ward at the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Center will serve as tertiary care referral sites for complicated maternal cases.

To help prevent duplication of effort, USAID is taking the lead in coordinating donor health funding and is fostering agreement on shared priorities and a division of labor based on the strength of each partner. In addition to commodities support by USAID, the total national need for commodities will be met by a combination of GOP, U.S. Government, and other key partners including the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations, the UK Department for International Development, and the United Nations Population Fund. Recent discussions with other bilateral partners in health indicate that they are fully committed to working with USAID to link financing to measurable and verifiable results in the priority areas of family planning and maternal and child health.

Value-Added of U.S. Assistance: USAID has been working in the health sector in Pakistan for five decades and has contributed to a number of successes in basic health services that are relatively simple to establish and strengthen. Through targeted funding for specific interventions in high priority districts, USAID helped increase the rate of skilled birth attendance to 52 percent versus a national average of 39 percent, increase the number of pregnant women who had at least three antenatal visits by 29 percent, and ensure that over 11,000 service delivery points were delivering comprehensive, high-quality family planning counseling and services. A survey found that 97 percent of families in these targeted districts now believe that pre-natal check-ups are necessary for the health and well-being of their women and children¹.

Communications Strategy: The health program already has a strong media outreach component. We will be more aggressively promoting U.S. Government health assistance by co-marking all branding with the U.S. flag and expanding from print media to more radio and TV. This will help the Pakistani public better understand that the assistance being received is from the American people.

¹ Pakistan Initiative for Mothers and Newborns Project Completion Report December 2010; Family Advancement for Life and Health Annual Report August 2010.